



# **JULIE LASSA**

## **STATE SENATOR**

**Testimony of Senator Julie Lassa on Senate Bill 335  
Senate Committee on Ethics Reform and Government Operations  
January 23, 2008**

Chairman Risser and committee members:

Thank you for holding this public hearing on Senate Bill 335, relating to changing the requirements for the publication of certain actions taken by certain local governments.

Last session I was a co-sponsor of Representative Gottlieb's Assembly Bill 257 and its companion Senate Bill 126 to change the requirements for publication of municipal ordinances in local papers. Our intention was to provide municipalities with a less costly alternative to publishing the full text of newly enacted ordinances. The bill did not pass but it started a productive dialogue between the municipalities and the Wisconsin Newspaper Association.

As a result of that dialogue, many municipal organizations and the Wisconsin Newspaper Association have come together to support Senate Bill 335. This bill allows local governments to save money by publishing the summary of adopted ordinances, as long as they also provide information about where the full text of the ordinance can be obtained.

Under this bill, a local government may continue to publish the complete text of an enacted ordinance, or it may publish a notice of the ordinance in a local newspaper. If they choose the latter, the notice must contain at least all of the following information:

1. The number and title of the ordinance.
2. The enactment date of the ordinance.
3. A summary of the ordinance, which shall be a brief, precise, and plain-language description that can be easily understood.
4. Information about where the full text of the ordinance may be obtained.

The bill makes no change to current law regarding the posting of ordinances in villages or towns.

These groups believe that this legislation will make it easier for the public to stay up-to-date with local government ordinance changes and will hold down taxpayers' costs while recognizing the newspaper's key role in keeping the electorate properly informed.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

**Groups in Support: Wisconsin Newspaper Association, the Wisconsin Counties Association, the League of Wisconsin Municipalities, the Wisconsin Alliance of Cities, the Wisconsin Towns Association, Outagamie County and Waukesha County**



# MARK GOTTLIEB

Speaker Pro Tempore  
Wisconsin State Assembly

**Testimony of Representative Mark Gottlieb  
Assembly Bill 582/Senate Bill 335  
Senate Committee on Ethics and Government Reform  
January 23, 2008**

Chairman Risser and Committee Members:

Thank you for holding this public hearing on Assembly Bill 582 (AB 582)/Senate Bill 335 (SB 335), relating to changing the requirements for the publication of certain actions taken by certain local governments.

Last session Senator Lassa and I introduced Assembly Bill 257 to change the requirements for publication of municipal ordinances in local papers. Just as current law allows the Secretary of State to publish the text of new state laws in summary, we wanted to give municipalities a less costly alternative to publishing the full text of newly enacted ordinances. The bill did not pass but it started a productive dialogue between the municipalities and the Wisconsin Newspaper Association.

As a result of that dialogue, the **Wisconsin Newspaper Association**, the **Wisconsin Counties Association**, the **League of Wisconsin Municipalities**, the **Wisconsin Alliance of Cities**, the **Wisconsin Towns Association**, **Outagamie County** and **Waukesha County** have come together to support Assembly Bill 582. This bill allows local governments to save money by publishing the summary of adopted ordinances, as long as they also provide information about where the full text of the ordinance can be obtained.

A local governmental unit may continue to publish the complete text of an enacted ordinance under AB 582/SB 335, or it may publish a notice of the ordinance in a local newspaper. If they choose the latter, the notice must contain at least all of the following information:

1. The number and title of the ordinance.
2. The enactment date of the ordinance.
3. A summary of the ordinance, which shall be a brief, precise, and plain-language description that can be easily understood.
4. Information about where the full text of the ordinance may be obtained.

The bills make no change to current law regarding the posting of ordinances in villages or towns.

These groups believe that this legislation will make it easier for the public to stay up-to-date with local government ordinance changes and will hold down taxpayers' costs while recognizing the newspaper's key role in keeping the electorate properly informed.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

**STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 60<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT**



122 W. Washington Avenue  
Suite 300  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703-2715

608/267-2380  
800/991-5502  
Fax: 608/267-0645

E-mail: [league@lwm-info.org](mailto:league@lwm-info.org)  
[www.lwm-info.org](http://www.lwm-info.org)

To: Senate Committee on Ethics Reform and Government Operations  
From: Curt Witynski, Assistant Director, League of Wisconsin Municipalities  
Date: January 23, 2008  
Re: **Support for SB 335/AB 582, Creating an Alternative to Publishing an Entire Ordinance in the Newspaper**

The League of Wisconsin Municipalities strongly supports SB 335/AB 582, compromise legislation that allows local governments to publish a summary of a new ordinance rather than the entire ordinance. The bill is the product of negotiations between local government groups and the Wisconsin Newspaper Association. It allows local governments to reduce their public notice costs, while ensuring that citizens are fully informed about local legislation. The Assembly recently passed AB 582 by a vote of 91-3.

This bill allows municipalities to publish newly adopted ordinances in the same abbreviated manner that the state publishes new laws. Under sec. 14.38(10)(c), Stats., the Secretary of State does not publish the full text of a new state law but rather prints a notice in the official state newspaper alerting the public that a new law has been enacted. The newspaper notice contains a summary of the law (i.e., the relating clause), the date of publication, and directions on obtaining a complete copy of the new law.

Similarly, SB 335/AB 582 allows a local government to publish a notice of a newly enacted ordinance in a local newspaper. The notice must contain at least all of the following information:

1. The number and title of the ordinance.
2. The enactment date of the ordinance.
3. A summary of the ordinance.
4. Information about where the full text of the ordinance may be obtained.

We join with the Wisconsin Counties Association, the Wisconsin Alliance of Cities, and the Wisconsin Newspapers Association in urging you to recommend passage of this sensible legislation.


Thanks for considering our comments on SB 335/AB 582.



22 EAST MIFFLIN STREET, SUITE 900  
MADISON, WI 53703  
TOLL FREE: 1.866.404.2700  
PHONE: 608.663.7188  
FAX: 608.663.7189  
www.wicounties.org

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Ethics Reform and Government Operations

FROM: John Reinemann, Legislative Director 

DATE: January 23, 2008

SUBJECT: Support for Assembly Bill 582

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) supports Assembly Bill 582 (AB 582), relating to changing the requirements for the publication of certain actions taken by certain local governments.

Under current law, the complete text of an ordinance that is enacted by a city, village, town, county or town sanitary district must be published in a local newspaper. AB 582 allows local governments to save money by publishing the summary of adopted ordinances, as long as they also provide information about where the full text of the ordinance can be obtained. This legislation will make it easier for the public to stay up-to-date with local government ordinance changes and will hold down taxpayers' costs while recognizing the newspaper's key role in keeping the electorate properly informed.

AB 582 is the result of collaboration between WCA, the Wisconsin Newspaper Association, the League of Wisconsin Municipalities, the Wisconsin Alliance of Cities and the Outagamie County Board of Supervisors. We appreciate the leadership of Representative Gottlieb and Senator Lassa in working to author legislation that we can all agree on.

AB 582 was passed by the Assembly on January 15, 2008 on a vote of 91-3.

Thank you for considering our comments. Please contact me if you have any questions.

## WISCONSIN NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION

...world's oldest press association, established 1853.

### OFFICERS

**President**  
RICHARD ROESGEN  
*The Sheboygan Press*

**First Vice President**  
KEN DISCHLER  
*The Park Falls Herald*

**Second Vice President**  
TOM SCHULTZ  
*Watertown Daily Times*

**Third Vice President**  
GARY RAWN  
*Prescott Journal*

**Secretary**  
STEVE DZUBAY  
*River Falls Journal*

**Treasurer**  
PIETER GRAASKAMP  
*Leader-Telegram, Eau Claire*

**Immediate Past President**  
TIM LYKE  
*The Ripon Commonwealth Press*

### DIRECTORS

DAVID HONAN  
*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel,  
Journal Community  
Publishing Group*

BYRON HIGGIN  
*Burnett County Sentinel,  
Grantsburg*

KENT EYMANN  
*Beloit Daily News*

KEVIN PASSON  
*Oconomowoc Enterprise*

RICHARD JOHNSTON  
*The Journal Times, Racine*

HELEN JUNGWIRTH  
*The Daily Tribune,  
Wisconsin Rapids  
Stevens Point Journal*

PAT REILLY  
*The Dodgeville Chronicle*

KATHY TOBIN  
*Tomahawk Leader*

WNA Executive Director  
PETER D. FOX

January 23, 2008

Senator Fred A. Risser, Chair  
Committee on Ethics Reform and Government Operations  
220 South, State Capitol  
PO Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707-7882

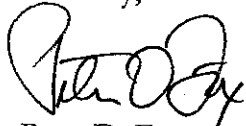
Dear Senator Risser and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Wisconsin Newspaper Association, I am pleased to join with colleagues from the League of Wisconsin Municipalities, Wisconsin Alliance of Cities, Wisconsin Counties Association and Wisconsin Towns Association in support of Assembly Bill 582 and its Senate companion, SB 335.

AB 582 and SB 335 are the result of thoughtful discussion and deliberation among the aforementioned organizations following a proposal initiated by State Representative Mark Gottlieb in a previous legislative session. AB 582 and SB 335 represent good public policy in providing for a reduction in costs to local governments while enhancing public awareness of and easy accessibility to newly enacted municipal ordinances. It is well worth noting that the proposal brought forth by Representative Gottlieb and Senator Julie Lassa maintains the four essential attributes of public notice that ensures government transparency and accountability in guiding our democratic process. Those four essential attributes are: publication in an independent forum, archivability, accessibility and verifiability.

The Wisconsin Newspaper Association is appreciative of the roles of Representative Gottlieb and Senator Lassa in bringing forward these bills, and recommends endorsement of them.

Sincerely,



Peter D. Fox  
Executive Director



January 23, 2008

TO: Senator Fred Risser, Chair  
Members of the Ethics Reform and Government Operations Committee

FR: Dave Krahn - Legislative Policy Advisor

**RE: Senate Bill 335 – Publications of Actions Taken by Local Governments**

The Wisconsin Newspaper Association, the Wisconsin Counties Association, the Wisconsin Towns Association, the League of Municipalities and the Alliance of Cities have negotiated an agreement on legislation regarding the publication of certain actions taken by local governments.

AB 582 will enable local units in Wisconsin to publish a summary of an enacted ordinance rather than an ordinance in its entirety. This will accomplish two noteworthy goals: reduce publishing costs for municipalities and counties and help to enhance public participation in the legislative process.

Our constituents are better informed when the information provided to them is more clearly and simply rendered via a summary in plain English as opposed to a lengthy, confounding ordinance in standard bureaucratize. When people are better informed, they are better equipped to participate in their government. This legislation achieves that goal *and* reduces local government costs.

As for the particulars regarding the notice to be published in a newspaper, state statutes would concisely dictate that:

The notice must contain at least all of the following information:

1. The number and title of the ordinance.
2. The enactment date of the ordinance.
3. A summary of the ordinance, which shall be a brief, precise, and plain-language description that can be easily understood.
4. Information about where the full text of the ordinance may be obtained.

With passage of this measure, Wisconsin would join many other states that permit publication of summaries of local ordinances.

This is win-win legislation for Wisconsin citizens at no cost to state coffers to achieve.

Waukesha County requests your support.

Thank you for your consideration.